

56 U03 A Letter from Sebastopol. A Hope dashed. by Dr Douglas J Austin U 03

I have transcribed the text of an interesting eBay item, offered as an "*Original Letter from Crimean War*". It was actually a contemporary copy, clearly intended for transmission among a family. The text reads as follows:-

"Copy of a letter from Private George Watson. 4th (Kings Own) Regt.

Camp before Sebastopol
June 8th 1855

Miss Arnold,

I received your very kind letter. I was very glad to see you bore it with such fortitude and patience as you did; it is nothing more than we must expect at such an undertaking as we have had, and still have to encounter with.

I cannot express my feelings on paper about my dear Master. I can assure you he was dearly beloved by all, and he was as deeply lamented - it so unfortunately happened the night he was taken prisoner, he was not with his own company, had he been so, it might otherwise have happened, not that they could have saved his life, but they could have brought him away, which they would have done at all hazards, or shared the same fate with him. Miss Arnold I have secured all papers, ornaments of his dress case, and many other little things such as I thought you would wish to have. I should have sent his sword but he had it with him at the time. Miss Arnold, if God spares me to return to old England once more, I will call on you for my dear Master's sake -

P.S. Miss Arnold; with joy I have to say that the report is through our Camp this afternoon that Captain Arnold is still alive, but in the hands of the Russians as a prisoner - God grant that it may be so. The last words my dear Master said to me just before he went on the trenches, I was to bring his writing case to him the next morning, for he was going to write to his mother. On my taking them down, with sorrow I heard what had happened - I will write immediately if I hear any more. We shall be in Sebastopol in 48 hours - The siege commenced at 3 p.m. on the 6th. It is nearly all to pieces.

Conclude from,
Your obedient humble servant
Private George Watson
4th Regiment."

Tony Margrave's **Officers List** informs us as follows:- William Trail ARNOLD (1826-55), Captain, 4th Foot, born Oct 23, 1826, son of Capt William Fitch Arnold, 19th Lancers, Little Missenden Abbey, Bucks & Elizabeth Cecilia, daughter of Captain Alexander Ruddach, RN, of Tobago. First commissioned Nov 20, 1846; Lieutenant, Nov 2, 1848; Captain, Feb 10, 1854. To 25th Foot, Nov 20, 1846; To 4th Foot, Nov 9, 1849.

Crimean War, March 8 to 25, 1854, to Malta aboard the "*Golden Fleece*"; March 25 to April 9, 1854, Malta; April 10 to 15, 1854 to Gallipoli aboard the "*Emu*"; April 15 to Aug 19, 1854, Gallipoli; Aug 20 to 23, 1854 to Varna aboard the "*Simla*;" Aug 23 to 30, 1854, Bulgaria; Aug 31 to Sept 14, 1854, aboard ship to the Crimea; Sept 14, 1854 to May 5, 1855, Crimea; May 5, 1855, Prisoner of War & Died of Wounds. His paternal grandfather was Benedict Arnold (1741-1801), an early American hero of the Revolutionary War (1775-83) who later became one of the most infamous traitors in U.S. history - after he switched sides and fought for the British.

At the outbreak of the war, Major-General Arnold participated in the capture of the British garrison of Fort Ticonderoga in 1775. In 1776, he hindered a British invasion of New York at the Battle of Lake Champlain. The following year, he played a crucial role in bringing about the surrender of British General John Burgoyne's army at Saratoga. Arnold never received the recognition he thought he deserved. In 1779, he entered into secret negotiations with the British, agreeing to turn over the U.S. post at West Point in return for money and a command in the British army. The plot was discovered and his go-between (Major John André) was hanged as a spy.

Arnold escaped to British lines and received a commission as a Brigadier-General in the British Army, an annual pension of £360, and a lump sum of over £6,000. He led British forces on raids in Virginia and against New London and Groton, Connecticut before the war effectively ended with the American victory at Yorktown. From his two marriages, he had many children, including Captain William Fitch Arnold (1795-1846), whose own marriage to Elizabeth Ruddach produced Reverend Edward Gladwin Arnold (1823-1887), Captain William Trail Arnold (1826-1855) and Georgiana Phipps Arnold (1829-1862). I feel sure that she was the "Miss Arnold" to whom the original optimistic (but sadly inaccurate) letter was addressed. The copy may have been sent to her brother Edward.

The regimental history states: *"On 5th May [1855] Captain Arnold of the King's Own was surprised and shot down as he was posting sentries in the advanced trenches; he was carried a prisoner to Sevastopol, where he died that night. Many of his men ran back to the main trench, but Private Thomas Scunelles stood firm, rallied his comrades and the position was held."* Arnold's British Crimea medal (Alma and Inkerman clasps) was sold by DNW for £3300 in 2005.